/118 cont'd/

648 by influential Li leaders. Hence, even at the present time, almost without exception all Miao land is rented from the Li (a small part also belongs to Chinese merchants who have made their for-
648 tunes in the Li area). From the economic point of view, there-
466 fore, the relationship between the Li and the Miao has been the relationship between landlords and tenants. The Miao have to pay a certain amount of annual rent to the Li leaders (landlords); sometimes they even have to contribute personal service without compensation. They have to make a contribution toward running the Li schools and t'uans equal to that of the Li participants, but they are not allowed to participate in their administration. Moreover, the ownership of the land belongs to the Li, who can take the land back from their Miao tenants at any time should the latter
648 be disobedient. /119/ During last year's call to "develop Hainan," many shrewd Li leaders declared that they would take the mountain lands back from the Miao to cultivate themselves. Some also took forest preservation as a pretext and forbade the Miao to burn the mountains. When this news reached the Miao community, they were scared to death and did not know what to do about it. Among these unreasonable arrangements, the most cruel one is that the mountains are rented to the Miao tenants, but they are forbidden to enjoy any of the mountain products other than the crops that they
● [223] cultivate. Some Miao pick some of the mountain products, such as edible fungus from trees and rattan, which they may bring out to barter with the Chinese. If they are caught on the way to market by the Li, all the commodities they carry with them are usually confiscated, and in addition they are heavily fined. Commodities subject to confiscation even include the animal skins which the Miao might have hunted in the mountains. Under such circumstances, the Li leaders and the Chinese landlord-merchants usually cooperate because their interests are identical. When I was in the Li area, I personally saw how these /Chinese/ merchants expressed their anti-Miao feeling. One can imagine how hard Miao life is. When I had just arrived in the Miao area, they all approached me with countless complaints about how they were badly treated by other peoples and how hard their livelihood was. They begged me

/76 cont./

252 [222] The bracken, chüeh ts'ai, is a wild plant. It is gathered and carried home. It is washed, and after being half cooked, it is strained and dried in the sun. Cooled overnight it is put in a jar, covered with tung leaves, and the jar stopped up with straw and turned upside down in a basin of water just as in making sour cooked fish.

263 The Miao's liking for sour flavor does not seem to be a natural tendency to like sour pungent things. It is probably due to their being in the interior, very far from the sea, where there are no salt wells near by and salt is difficult to obtain. Hence the Miao were not acquainted with salty flavor. Today in the Miao language there is no distinction made between saltiness and bitterness. During the time when the Miao had no salt at all, for the most part they only had sour pungent foods to whet their appetite. It was so from generation to generation, and today, even though they have salt, they still retain the liking for eating sour pungent things.

264 [415] Formerly, the Miao did not use chopsticks. The cooked rice was turned onto a basin, around which the family members gathered, digging into the rice with both hands. Vegetables were placed in bamboo buckets and earthenware. When they 252 had meat they singed off the hair over the fire and ate it half 262 cooked. They also ate snakes and insects. Snakes were roasted; earthworms were pickled with salt; grasshoppers, bees, and grubs were either roasted or fried. They also mixed rice gruel with fish and maggots to eat, and considered this a delicacy, which was called yin. Rich families kept yin for several [556] generations. (1) /77/ Again, suckling pigs weighing more

1. Tien Ju-ch'eng in his Yen Chiao Chi Wen says: "The southern aborigines mixed buckwheat ashes with millet paste and let it ferment into a pungent agent, into which were thrown fish and

39: Bernatzik--460 E-5 (1936-1937) 1947 AO1 Thailand

[p 459 is blank]

AKha A04
Miao AE5

Chapter 17

Means of Subsistence

a) Gathering

M 222 After the harvest the Meau regularly gather wild roots, tubers, and fruits. Beyond this time gathering is done only M [731] occasionally, for instance, on hunting expeditions or during migrations. In times of crop failures, however, gathering plays an important role and may even become a necessity A 222 [262] [731] for survival. Among the Akha in Thailand, who live under absolutely the same climatic conditions and whose diet, in accordance with their generally greater primitiveness, is less varied than that of the Meau, gathering plays at least an equally important role in times of famine. In years of abundance, on the other hand, it is likewise practiced regularly only after the harvest, but otherwise only occasionally.

b) Hunting

M 224 Hunting is of much greater significance than gathering among the Meau and among the Akha. The Meau are excellent observers, have presence of mind, and are animated A [224] by a burning passion for the hunt. Since, in addition, they M [151] are excellent marksmen and have great patience and endurance, they have all the qualifications for good hunters.

[184] With regard to the Meau in Indochina, who, of course, are in a far better position economically than the mountain peoples on the poor soil in northern Thailand, hunting seems to be less important. Lajonquière (1) writes, for instance:

1. II, p. 311.

M [411] [171] [389] "Hunting is not practiced as a regular means of subsistence but they are nevertheless skilled hunters. They use a gun similar to the one of the 'Man,' which, /340/ like the powder, they make themselves."